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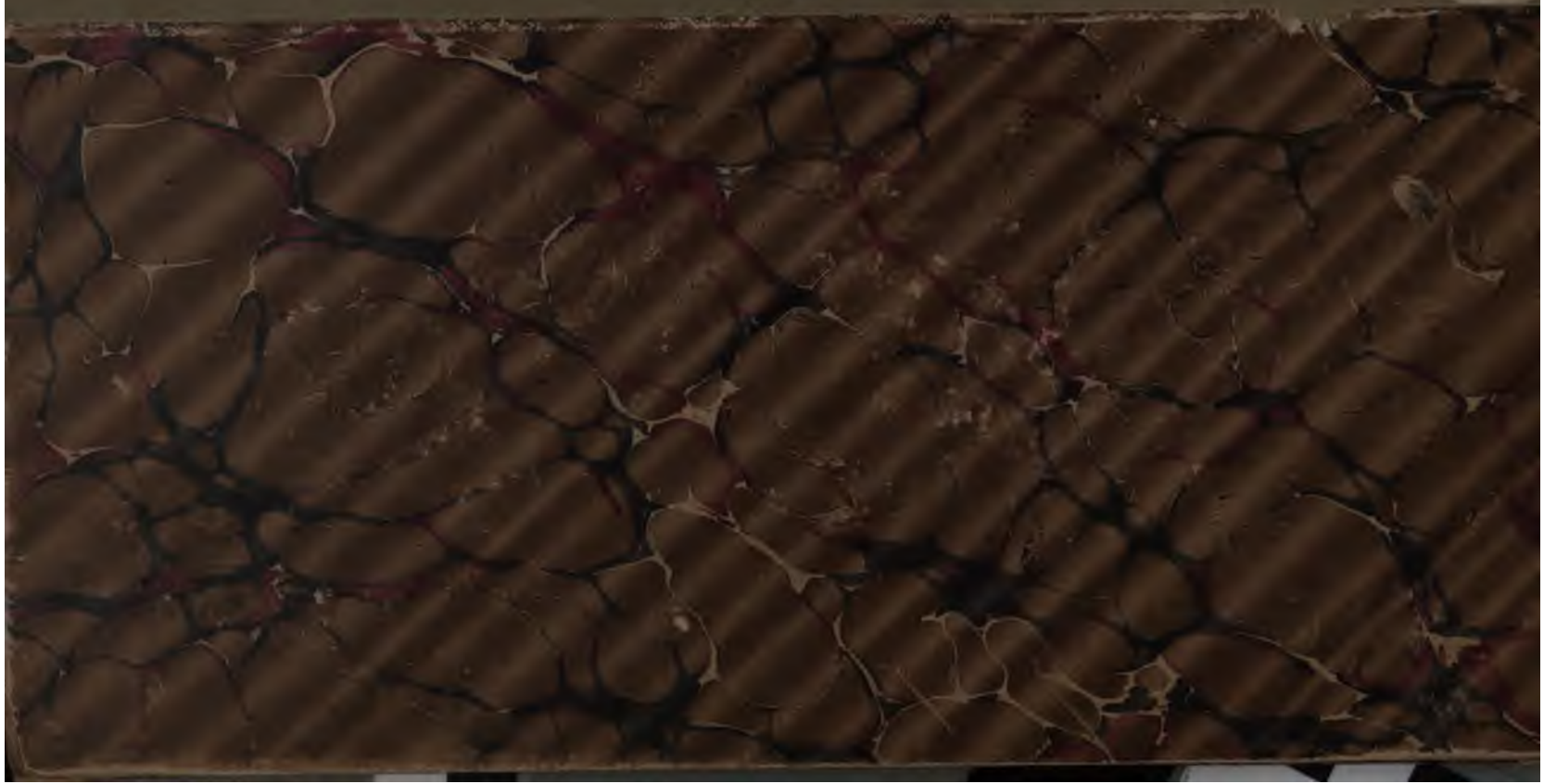

MIXED EDUCATION OF BOYS AND GIRLS

IN

ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

BY THE HON.

DUDLEY CAMPBELL, M.A.

RIVINGTONS
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[1]MIXED EDUCATION OF BOYS AND GIRLS.

A remarkable revolution is taking place in general education. The system established before the Reformation, after long resistance, is yielding to the influence of modern criticism. Boys have ceased to be regarded as portions of so much uniform material, intended by Providence to be moulded after one pattern. Tastes and idiosyncrasies are looked upon no longer as evils to be repressed, but rather as legitimate tendencies worthy to be considered and developed. Loading the memory is generally allowed to be a matter of less importance than inducing the pupil to observe and to think for himself. Teaching is ranked as an art only to be undertaken by persons specially trained, except, as it would seem, where a high University degree is still looked upon as a sufficient diploma for tutorial capacity. In short, the labour of the vigorous writers who have striven to substitute natural for artificial and conventional methods of instruction, is now bearing fruit; and such men are entitled to no scanty meed of praise for

[1] Reprinted from the 'Contemporary Review.'

having so successfully dealt with one part of a most important question.

But a branch of education no less important than the intellectual is the moral, and yet, comparatively speaking, little pains have been given to its investigation. People perplexed by the difficulty of introducing any improvement are apt, like the ostrich covering its eyes to avoid the sight of danger, to ignore all imperfection, and to assume that the conduct and character of the young are in the main eminently satisfactory. Yet, as in the days of Quintilian, and, more recently, in those of Dr. Arnold, so in the present generation the moral tone of public schools not unfrequently falls below that of family life. That girl schools are far from perfection may partly be inferred from the habit of the wealthier classes to educate their daughters at home.

No doubt young people are instructed in morality after a fashion, just as a few years ago their minds were intellectually trained after a fashion. If the catechism is learned by heart, church regularly attended, prayers read out by the master twice a day, the Old and New Testaments carefully studied, and a proper discipline maintained, enough is then assumed to be done. And, under the system pursued, a few of happier temperament find their inner spirit touched and their higher nature vivified.

But with regard to the majority, notwithstanding the exertions of the eminent men who at various

times have presided over English schools, the moral result leaves much to regret; for, though the golden rule against selfishness is commonly known, boys are not more methodically trained in the application of the rule to a complex state of civilization than they are instructed in the laws of the body and the means of preserving health. Moreover, it is generally admitted that the modes of teaching now practised are rarely successful in exciting among the majority of students either zeal for self-improvement or continuous interest in their work.

For a state of things thus plainly defective, however much opinions may differ as to the extent of the evil, can no remedies be devised? Two, at least, might be attempted. Morality might be more carefully and scientifically taught. It might be based not only on theology but also on nature. An appeal might be made to the reason. The consequences of acts might be more fully explained. An ordinary boy, forbidden to do this or that simply because it would be wrong, feels no counterpoise capable of resisting a strong inclination created within him. Where authority has failed to influence him he might have been saved by his intelligence had it been awakened. At present too little endeavour is made to distinguish between *mala prohibita* and *mala in se.* And the plan adopted often results in inducing boys to put the two *genera* on the same level of importance. Unfortunately this level is apt to be the lower instead

of the higher. A youth perceiving that many of the enactments said to be binding on him are arbitrary, is prone to think, when prompted by views of immediate self-interest, that all rules have only an arbitrary foundation.

Again, much more might be done than has yet been attempted in this country, to make children less intolerant of innocent eccentricity, and less indifferent to one another's interests and feelings. The effect of early training is seen in the general condemnation of many vices and crimes. If some of the minor immoralities were added to the list, such, for instance, as heedlessly saying anything to another person's disadvantage, or even forming hasty and uncharitable judgments, might not the social atmosphere, both of school and of later life, be rendered appreciably purer?

But there remains to be applied an influence entirely ignored by the principal educators of this country, yet taking rank amongst the most potent agencies for moulding the human mind and character. The moral power of sex upon sex would seem to be regarded as either useless or dangerous. For all the care of the better known institutions, professing to train and completely equip their pupils for the duties of the future, a man might pass his life, from the cradle to the time of taking his degree as a Master of Arts, without ever seeing the face of a woman or hearing the sound of her voice. Yet everyone would admit that such chance opportuni-

ties as youths enjoy of associating with ladies are of the utmost value; and that but for the time spent at home before going to school, and, later, for the holidays, they would grow up with very imperfect notions of civilisation. Moreover, it is often observed that boys without sisters are less cultivated and refined than their fellows who in this respect have been more fortunate.

Such reflections naturally suggest the inquiry whether an influence so admirable and efficient, in spite of the limited sphere allowed to it, might not be yet more serviceable if permitted to work on a larger scale. Is the society of woman like those Indian spices which, in order to be beneficial, must be sparingly used? or is it like pure air, which men are glad to have in abundance at all seasons of the year? Why should an atmosphere so healthy at home be thought perilous at school? Why should an agency admitted to be good and even necessary in August and September be counted as worthless, if not mischievous, in October and November? If boys and girls, young men and young women, may dance and sing and generally play and amuse themselves together with advantage, is any special danger to be apprehended if they should also study together? Might not the refining influence of the one sex upon the other be expected to continue, so that the boys aiming at a higher standard of conduct would be less prone to selfishness, bullying, and "rowdyism" of

in the received methods of securing propriety of behaviour on the part of young women. At present mothers generally trust for the security of their daughters to ignorance and a duenna. But ignorance may cease, and duennas may be eluded. A better safeguard, assuredly, is to be found in the development of intelligence and moral force. It is through attention to these that the great freedom of women, now prevalent in newer countries, is found to be not only innocuous but positively beneficial to society.

The considerations already advanced might surely justify philanthropists in trying the effect of educating boys and girls in the same schools. But the plan is not new. For many years it has been carried out with signal success. In Scotland, from the days of Knox till now, boys and girls have attended the same class in parish schools up to the age of fifteen. In some schools in England the system has been found to answer up to the same age. An excellent instance is afforded by the admirable Home and Colonial School in Gray's Inn Road, near King's Cross, where 1000 pupils of both sexes are trained under the most advanced and enlightened methods of instruction. An example no less striking is afforded by the Birkbeck Literary Institution. The classes there, held every evening, are attended by both men and women. The whole number belonging to the institution, whether for the sake of the classes or the library, is about two thousand; and it

would be difficult to name a body of students, either more respectable in character, or, considering the tax put upon their energies by daily business, more zealous for self-improvement.

At the Central Station of the Telegraph Department a mixed staff of clerks, about a thousand in number, work together. Mr. Scudamore, in his official Report of 1872, says of the experiment, "It raises the tone of the male staff. . . . And further, it is matter of experience with us that the male clerks are more willing to help the female clerks with their work than to help each other, and that on many occasions pressure of business is met and difficulty overcome through this willingness and cordial co-operation. . . . I trust to see the plan which we have adopted with so much success extended wherever work suitable for females can be found."

So again in Schools of Art the separation of the sexes has not been thought desirable.

But the great field for observation is in America. Mixed Education prevails to a very great extent in the Eastern States; and in the Western States the separate system has almost ceased to exist. Nor is any limit placed upon the age up to which the sexes are permitted to unite in study. At Oberlin College in the State of Ohio, where the pupils number a thousand, half of them women, the ages vary from seventeen to seven-and-twenty; and there the system

has been in successful operation for more than five-and-thirty years. The testimony of the Professors is unanimous to the effect that the general tone of the students, not only as to conduct, but also as to industry, is far superior to what is usual in colleges managed on the separate principle. Cases of ungentlemanly behaviour are almost unknown. Indeed punishments, as is generally the case at schools in the Western States, are found to be unnecessary; and attention to study is secured without resorting to the doubtful principle of competition for prizes or rank. There are pass examinations; but no placing in order of merit. The natural interest excited by the subject pursued, supported by a sense of duty and a desire to gain the good opinion of a class not all of one sex, is found to be a sufficient stimulant to the faculties of both men and women. The following is the substance of a conversation with one of the Professors, written down by me on the day of its occurrence in 1871:—"The system answers very well with us. The whole of our arrangements have been made from the beginning with a view to it. Under different conditions it might not be so successful. It is the most natural system, and probably would succeed ultimately at the older universities; but I should not like to send my daughters to Harvard if it were tried there. I should consider them as safe here as at the best ladies' school in America. We find that the presence of the girls has a good effect upon

the men and that of the men upon the girls. We think that girls if kept away from young men will be dreaming about them, and that it is better that they should see them. Nothing acts as a better antidote for romance than young men and women doing geometry together at eight o'clock every morning. Intimacies sometimes spring up leading to matrimony, but very seldom amongst those in the same class. The men have their meals with the girls and may visit them, but only in the public parlours of the boarding-houses; and they may walk with them in the town, but not out of it unless they have permission; and the two are not allowed to go to or from church together."

After spending some days in visiting the different classes, I became convinced that the words above cited were free from the slightest exaggeration. Whether they were being instructed by a gentleman or a lady, the attention of the pupils was above criticism. And the women seemed to have no difficulty in holding their own with the other students. In Greek, a very few years ago, the three most advanced scholars were ladies. Yet the minds of the women seemed to remain essentially feminine. In selecting subjects for compositions the men inclined to politics and science, the ladies to sentiment and imagination. The excellent demeanour of the students seemed to be by no means confined to the class-room.

No less favourable is the account of Monsieur Hippeaux, who, sent out by the French Government to report upon the system at Oberlin and similar places, and starting with a due share of French prejudice against it, was constrained to bless instead of to curse, to record astonishment and admiration instead of disapproval.

Some other restrictions than those already mentioned are imposed upon the lady undergraduates, such as that they may not go without leave to the post-office or the railway station; and marriage is not allowable to anyone still in *statu pupillari*. But at Michigan University (an admirably conducted institution, with twelve hundred students), both men and women, when not actually at work in the lecture-room, are left entirely to their own discretion.

Michigan is a recent conversion to the new principle. Women have not been admitted there above four years. Many of the authorities were much opposed to what they considered a dangerous innovation, and only yielded with much misgiving under the pressure of Western opinion. They now frankly admit their former error, and assert that the exclusion of lady students would banish a most valuable and improving element. In a place remarkable for its industry the lady students are seldom surpassed (proportionately to their much smaller number) either in excellence of conduct or successful application to their books. I might give my own evidence as to

the intelligent interest they appeared to take in an admirable lecture on law given by Judge Campbell of the Supreme Court of Michigan, and to the zeal with which others were working in the chemical laboratory.

Amongst the oldest of the mixed Colleges is Antioch, in Ohio. An experience of from twenty to thirty years has convinced its Professors that the plan of associating the sexes in education is both safe and satisfactory. The men and women are about equal in number, but the total does not greatly exceed a hundred. The College itself is in every way excellent and attractive; the Unitarian denomination, however, to which most of its Professors belong, though popular in many parts of the Eastern States, is not regarded with favour in the West.

I was much struck by the intelligence evinced by the English and German classes. As for that in Political Economy, consisting mainly of ladies, and presided over by Principal Hosmer, its equal for brightness and proficiency could not easily be found in this country.

The Principal gave me the following instance in proof of the healthy public opinion prevailing at Antioch. One of the young men had been guilty of intoxication, and was told by the Principal that some allusion to his conduct would probably be made before the assembled students. "Do with me," replied the

culprit, "whatever you like, only pray do not let the ladies know about it."

Having proved the greater, one hardly need dwell upon the less, and therefore mixed schools, where the age of the pupils is usually not above fifteen or sixteen, may be quickly passed over. At the High School of St. Louis, in a class unusually advanced (and likely to continue so while under the tuition of Mr. Thomas Davidson, an eminent graduate of Aberdeen), it was clear to me that the girls were not only as quick, but had as firm a grasp of what they were learning, as the boys. And the discipline of the school, Mr. Davidson assured me, is maintained by no severer method than friendly remonstrance where needed, with a periodical report of conduct and progress to the parents. The case is the more remarkable from many of the pupils learning nothing about religion, either at school or at home. These are for the most part the children of German Emigrants, of whom a large portion has ceased to believe in Revelation. Yet the moral conduct of such children, as compared with that of children elsewhere, is found to be excellent.

A notable feature of this school, though one by no means peculiar in the West, is the friendly footing maintained by masters and pupils. In England an artificial barrier, only tolerable through custom, separates the two classes; and in proportion to the care with which the division is made, so the influence

of the master is diminished. In America the teacher's relation to his pupils is rather that of a judicious elder brother. He thus has a great advantage over the distant and awful preceptor of an older society in learning their dispositions, in assisting them in difficulty, and in forming their characters.

Joint education is probably facilitated in America by the children usually living at home and attending the school only during a portion of the day; but this condition is by no means essential. At Oberlin about a hundred of the ladies live in one large building called the Ladies' Hall, under the supervision of a lady principal. The others board in the town with different families. At Swarthmore, a large college near Philadelphia, where the ages of the pupils vary from 12 to 19, both the boys and the girls sleep in different parts of the same building. There is probably not a better school in the United States. No one can visit it without being impressed by the admirable tone, manner, and aptitude of both teachers (many of them ladies) and scholars. At meals the boys and girls sit side by side, and, as in this and other ways they are much more thrown together than the pupils of a day school, Swarthmore College may be looked upon as affording a crucial test of the system of joint education, and as proving that, if properly conducted, such a system is certain to succeed.

A consideration not to be overlooked in forming

an opinion on the value of the preceding statements is that, whilst several conversions to mixed education have taken place in separate establishments, the step once taken has never been retraced. Again, parents educated under the joint system, and therefore fully cognizant of its dangers, freely send their children to mixed schools in preference to those still insisting on separation.

Other advantages of the system not unworthy of being taken into account, are, that the manners of the boys are manifestly much improved by it. Where brothers and sisters attend the same school, the influence of home is not easily forgotten. And on entering the grown-up world, men are better prepared for the part they ought to play; not, on the one hand, ready to look on women as angels rather than human beings, nor, on the other, to despise and keep aloof from their society; but rather to find them very desirable companions in the pursuits and interests of every day life. The practice, moreover, doubtless contributes to the healthier moral tone which makes it possible to dispense with chaperons whether by day or by night; at the morning call, the lecture-room, and the church, or the dance and the moonlight sleighing.

To many minds a sufficient recommendation of the practice of bringing up girls with boys will appear in the fact that by means of it industry may be

secured without reward and good conduct maintained without punishment. But the reason which led the United States into the adoption of this system was the difficulty of providing in any other way for the proper education of women. To create for them duplicate schools and colleges throughout the land, with preceptors co-equal in knowledge and competency, would have been financially impossible. Places for joint education were, therefore, established, while numbers of those originally intended for the male sex only have one after another abandoned their exclusive traditions.

The argument assuredly applies with undiminished strength to this country. The daughters of the wealthier classes may continue to secure in a measure at home the advantages of a first-rate school or college. But under the separate system, the opportunities of the majority must long remain lamentably inadequate. Such an objection will seem unimportant to thinkers fearful that with increasing knowledge feminine attractiveness may disappear. But the time may come when public opinion will concede that women can safely be trusted to develope their natural faculties. The question of how the sexes may be educated together must then rank as one entitled to practical consideration.

Since the above Paper was written, the danger of over-working girls has been urged as an objection to mixed education.

Whatever be the plan adopted, girls, and boys also, will sometimes go beyond their strength. But the evil does not seem to be greater under the mixed than under the separate system. Where competitive examinations can be dispensed with, the health of individual students may be considered in fixing upon the subjects they are recommended to learn. At Oberlin, for instance, "the Ladies' Course" omits some of the subjects in "the Gentlemen's Course." Between these two the girls may choose, and as a rule they prefer the easier path.

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